

# Recognizing Main Idea and Details

## STUDENT OBJECTIVES

- Identify the main idea of a Paragraph
- Recognize types of supporting details

## RESOURCES AND PREPARATION

You will need photocopies for students of:

- **Student Lesson Summary**, p. 33
- **Teaching Model**, p. 34
- **Practice Worksheets**, Levels A and B, pp. 35-36
- **Reteaching Worksheet**, p. 37

## Teach

- 1. Main Idea and Supporting Details:** Explain that Paragraphs usually develop a single main idea, often expressed in a **topic sentence**. Ask students why a Paragraph's other sentences might be referred to as **supporting details**. (*because they support, or tell more about, the main idea.*)
- 2. Teaching Finding the Main Idea:** Pass out the **Lesson Summary** and review the **Academic Vocabulary**. Guide students through reading the **Here's How** steps. Then distribute the **Teaching Model**.
  - Explain that, in each example, students should look for the one sentence that tells the author's main point, main subject-matter, or main message. This is the main-idea sentence.
  - If no sentence jumps out, suggest they eliminate other sentences that contain minor details. Signal words such as *first, second, third, moreover, or in addition* show that a sentence contains a supporting detail, not a main point.
  - Remind students that some Paragraphs, especially in stories and descriptions, have no topic sentence. In such cases, readers looking for the main idea must figure out what general thread ties the sentences together.
- 3. Teaching Different Types of Supporting Details:** Use the examples on the **Teaching Model** to review four types of supporting details.
  - Have student volunteers read each sample Paragraph aloud.
  - Discuss the types of supporting details in each, and how they differ from one to another.
  - Ask: What determines the type of detail used in each case? (*The type of detail used is determined by the idea expressed in the topic sentence.*)
- 4. Guided Practice:** Work with students to answer these questions about each Paragraph:
  - **Examples:** What is the main idea of the Paragraph? (*that musical instruments come in a variety of shapes*) What are some examples used to support the main idea? (*curly shape of French horn; long slide of trombone*)
  - **Sensory Details:** What are some of the sensory details in the Paragraph? (*lovely shades of pink; ruffled petals; pert and pretty shape; fresh clean scent; pleasant aroma; stand straight and tall; dark-green stems*) Why were sensory details used in the Paragraph? (*to help readers see and smell carnations*)

## RECOGNIZING MAIN IDEA AND DETAILS, CONTINUED

- **Facts and Statistics:** Which sentence in the Paragraph is a statistic? Why? (*the second sentence; It is a fact expressed in numbers.*) How do the facts and statistics support the topic sentence? (*They show why the writer thinks Babe Ruth was the greatest player ever.*)
- **Reasons:** What opinion is stated in the topic sentence? (*Yellow is the best color to paint a dark or gloomy room.*) Do all the supporting details in this Paragraph give reasons for that opinion? (*yes*) Why were reasons used in the Paragraph? (*to try to persuade the reader to accept the opinion*)

**QUICK CHECK.** Ask students what type of supporting details they might use in a Paragraph that:

1. argues that baseball should abandon the designated hitter (*reasons*)
2. describes a Memorial Day parade and picnic (*sensory details*)
3. compares and contrasts the writing styles of Mark Twain and Charles Dickens (*examples*)
4. explains why people should ride bicycles instead of driving (*reasons, facts and statistics*)

### Practice and Apply

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Activities involving main idea and types of supporting details appear on pp. 35–36.

- Assign **Practice Worksheet A** to students who need more structured activities.
- Assign **Practice Worksheet B** to grade-level and above-level students.

#### Answer Key: Practice Worksheet A

1. *a; last sentence*
2. *d; first sentence*
3. *b; last sentence*
4. *c; first sentence*

#### Answer Key: Practice Worksheet B

1. *facts and statistics*
2. *examples*
3. *sensory details*
4. *reasons*
5. *facts and statistics*
6. *Sample topic sentence: You must prepare carefully before painting a room. Sample detail: Wear old clothes, because you are sure to get paint on them no matter how careful you are.*
7. *Sample topic sentence: Low-carb diets are clearly not healthy or nutritious. Sample detail: It would be best just to eat a well-rounded diet and not overeat.*

## Assess and Reteach

Use these guidelines to determine if students need the **Reteaching Worksheet**.

- **Practice Worksheet A:** Students should choose the correct letter answers in each of the four items to identify the type of supporting details. They should identify the main-idea sentence in at least three of the four items.
- **Practice Worksheet B:** Students should correctly answer at least four of items 1–5. They should write complete sentences, close to the sample answers, for items 6–7.

For students who need reteaching, review the **Lesson Summary**. Use the definitions and the **Here's How** steps to go over the examples from **Practice Worksheet A**. Then, have students complete the **Reteaching Worksheet**, p. 37.

### Answer Key: Reteaching Worksheet

1. *Earthquakes have often shaken the city of San Francisco.*
2. *facts and statistics*
3. *Main Idea—Earthquakes have often shaken the city of San Francisco.*
4. *Detail—1906 earthquake registered 8.6 on Richter scale.*
5. *Detail—400 people were killed.*
6. *Detail—28,000 buildings were destroyed*
7. *Detail—1989 earthquake killed 67 people*
8. *Detail—halted World Series*